



**BLACK
SOUTHERN
WOMEN'S
COLLABORATIVE**

FROM THE GROUND UP: UNDERSTANDING VOTING CHALLENGES & COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Black Southern Women's Collaborative Fellows
Report Compiled by Robinson Research and Consulting



TRANSFORM
—ALABAMA—

**ALABAMA
FORWARD**

**FAITH
IN ACTION**
ALABAMA

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The importance of movement building is not only a state fight but a regional fight. We include the Louisiana redistricting timeline because it is intertwined with the Alabama timeline. The Supreme Court ruling on *Allen v. Milligan* directly affected the Louisiana court case. We are all battling in court around fair maps and voting rights.



NOVEMBER 3, 2021
Legislature Passes Unfair Maps

NOVEMBER 16, 2021
Lawsuit Filed Against State of Alabama
Plaintiffs in *Milligan v. Merrill* filed a lawsuit against the state of Alabama, arguing the “packing of one-third of Black Alabamians into congressional district 7 and cracking the remaining Black community” proves that the district lines are predominantly influenced by race.

JANUARY 24, 2022
Three-Judge Panel Orders Maps to Be Redrawn Within Two Weeks



MARCH 31, 2022
Lawsuit Filed in Louisiana
Civil rights groups and Black Louisiana voters filed a lawsuit (*Robinson v. Ardoin*) in federal court challenging the state’s new congressional map as a violation of the Voting Rights Act.

JUNE 6, 2022
Federal Court Strikes Down Maps and Orders Them to Be Redrawn

FEBRUARY 7, 2022
State Appeals to SCOTUS; Stay Issued That Allows Unfair Maps to Stay in Place for 2022 Election

OCTOBER 4, 2022
Case Heard at Supreme Court
Allen v. Milligan (formerly *Merrill v. Milligan*) to be heard at the Supreme Court.

JUNE 8, 2023
SCOTUS Rules In Favor of Fair Maps

JUNE 16, 2023
Court Gives Date for New Map to Pass

JUNE 28, 2022
SCOTUS Issues Stay
SCOTUS issued a stay on the *Robinson v. Ardoin* case while they were considering the similar case of *Milligan v. Merrill*.

JUNE 26, 2023
SCOTUS Lifts Stay and Dismisses Louisiana’s Appeal

REDISTRICTING TIMELINE

JULY 17, 2023

Alabama Legislature Pushes Through Map Without Additional majority-Black District

SEPTEMBER 11, 2023

Court Rejects Request to Postpone Decision to Have Special Master Redraw Map; State Files Appeal With SCOTUS

OCTOBER 5, 2023

Court Mandates the Implementation of New Congressional Map

A federal court mandated the implementation of a new congressional map for Alabama, designed by a court-appointed special master. The map, referred to as Remedial Plan 3 has been created to establish a majority-Black district and a Black opportunity district.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2023

Court Struck Down Map and Orders Special Master to Redraw Map

SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

SCOTUS Refuses Alabama's Request to Reinstate Unfair Congressional Map

FEBRUARY 3, 2025

A Federal Court Has Set A Trial Date Early Next Year In Alabama's Redistricting Case.

JULY 17, 2023

Court Orders Remedial Map Hearing to Proceed

OCTOBER 6, 2023

Oral Arguments Begin in Federal Court of Appeals.

NOVEMBER 2, 2023

Fifth Circuit Deems a New Map Can and Should be Enacted for 2024

JANUARY 19, 2024

New Congressional Map Approved With a Second Black-Majority House District

JANUARY 31, 2024

Group Files Suit Against the New Map

APRIL 30 & MAY 15, 2024

Three-Judge Panel Strikes Down New Congressional Map Six Months Before Election Then Supreme Court Reinstates Map With Second Black-Majority House District

Timeline constructed with assistance from Annesha Hardy, Alabama Values.



INTRODUCTION

The Alabama Black Voter Project was created as a practicum at the end of a fellowship developed by the Black Southern Women's Collaborative, led by Phyllis Hill. The Alabama Black Voter Project was funded by Alabama Forward, the statewide table advancing the work of member organizations and co-hosted by Faith in Action Alabama and Transform Alabama.

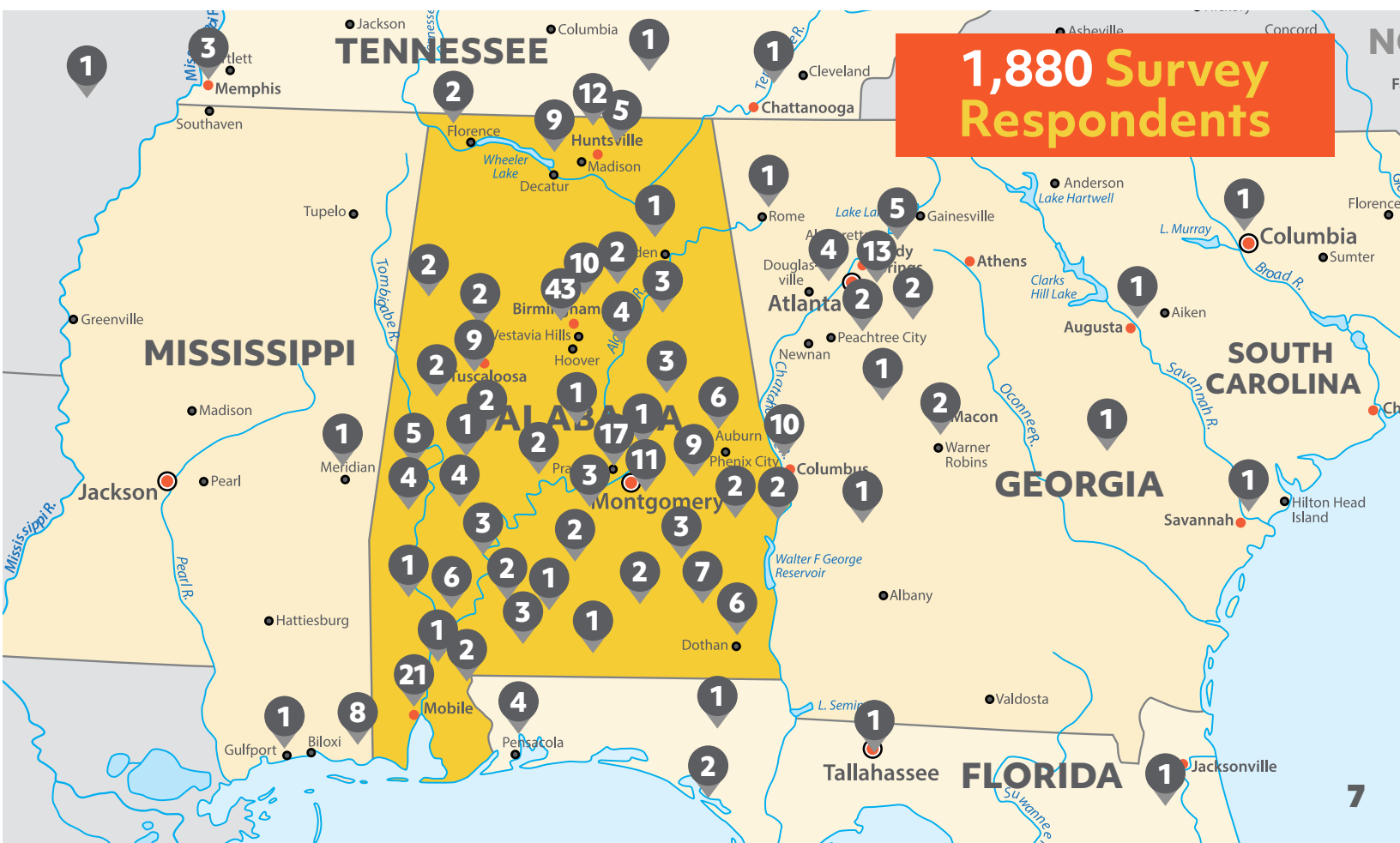
The Black Southern Women's Collaborative's mission is a commitment to enhance and empower Southern Black life, particularly Black Women no matter their status, occupation, sexuality, spirituality or color, by holding regional space to strategize, train and fundraise for the sustainability of our organizations, which also serve as political homes for our people.

The fellowship was created to provide financial support and training to Black women organizers in Alabama. The training started in 2022 and lasted approximately nine months. Following the training, to put into practice that training, the group was encouraged to conduct a series of 1-on-1s with community members. Several members of the fellowship group, including Teumbay Barnes, Kameryn Thigpen, Onoyemi Williams, and Dr. Adia Winfrey, took it a step further and decided to develop a survey that began with curiosity around Alabama's new Congressional district and expanded to asking other civic engagement questions.

In October 2023, following the Allen v. Milligan Supreme Court decision, Congressional District 2 was created by court order and was designed to boost the voting power of Black residents. The survey started as a way to gauge whether Black residents in Alabama were aware of the district. The group then became alarmed when it was reported that turnout in the 2022 midterm election was the lowest in a general election contest in over 35 years. The four fellows then worked on developing additional questions

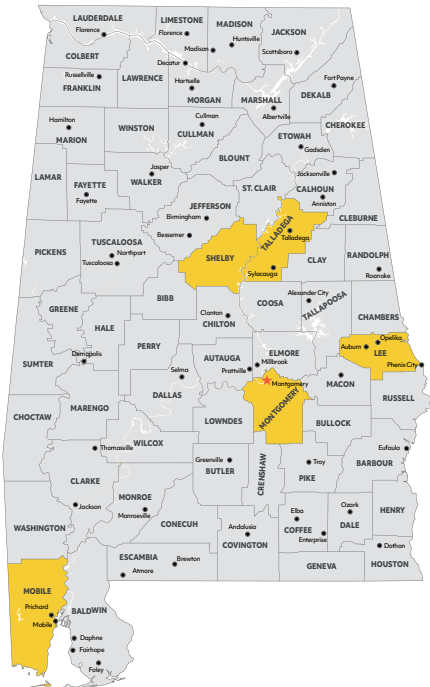
related to voting and representation, and they split the distribution of the survey through various networks, including the AME church, AME Zion church, HBCU gatherings, and other community outreach efforts. They collected responses in a multitude of ways: they knocked on doors, organized community events, conducted in-person trainings at each of the denominational regional conferences, worked with church leaders to disseminate the survey to their parishioners via their communications channels, attended HBCU homecoming events, and they reached out to their own family and friends. There were areas in the state where the team had to pivot and print paper versions of the survey and manually enter the data in order to capture the responses of older residents and individuals in rural communities.

This survey was in the field from August 23, 2023 to January 15, 2024 and resulted in 1,880 responses from all over the state of Alabama and beyond. The following map pinpoints the ZIP codes in which survey respondents reside. For the purposes of this survey report, the subgroups that are listed in charts refer to specific collection efforts. For example, AME and AME Zion are efforts targeted directly within those faith communities. Community Outreach refers to a random mix of Alabama citizens who were engaged at local events, within the community, or through everyday life activities and do not fit in the other collection groups.





14 Virtual Focus Group Participants From Across the State



To reach and engage nearly 2,000 Black Alabama existing or potential voters was no small feat and should be commended.

In a political environment in which Black voters are either overlooked or considered a monolith and not studied in the ways, other demographic groups are studied for understanding in maximizing engagement, creating effective messaging, and increasing turnout. Coupled with disinvestment in Black communities, this has resulted in a deep level of cynicism, disengagement, and disinterest in the political process. This project demonstrates that when engaged with genuine interest, non-judgment, the ability to meet people where they are, and a willingness to educate, Black voters are willing to participate, provide insights that can be translated into strategy, and offer solution-oriented suggestions.

Following survey collection, selected respondents were invited to participate in virtual focus groups that were facilitated on January 28, 2024 and February 18, 2024 to provide insights related to the survey findings. **A total of 14 people from Talladega, Lee, Mobile, Shelby, and Montgomery counties participated in the focus groups.**

This report details the results of the survey and provides a summary of focus group feedback.



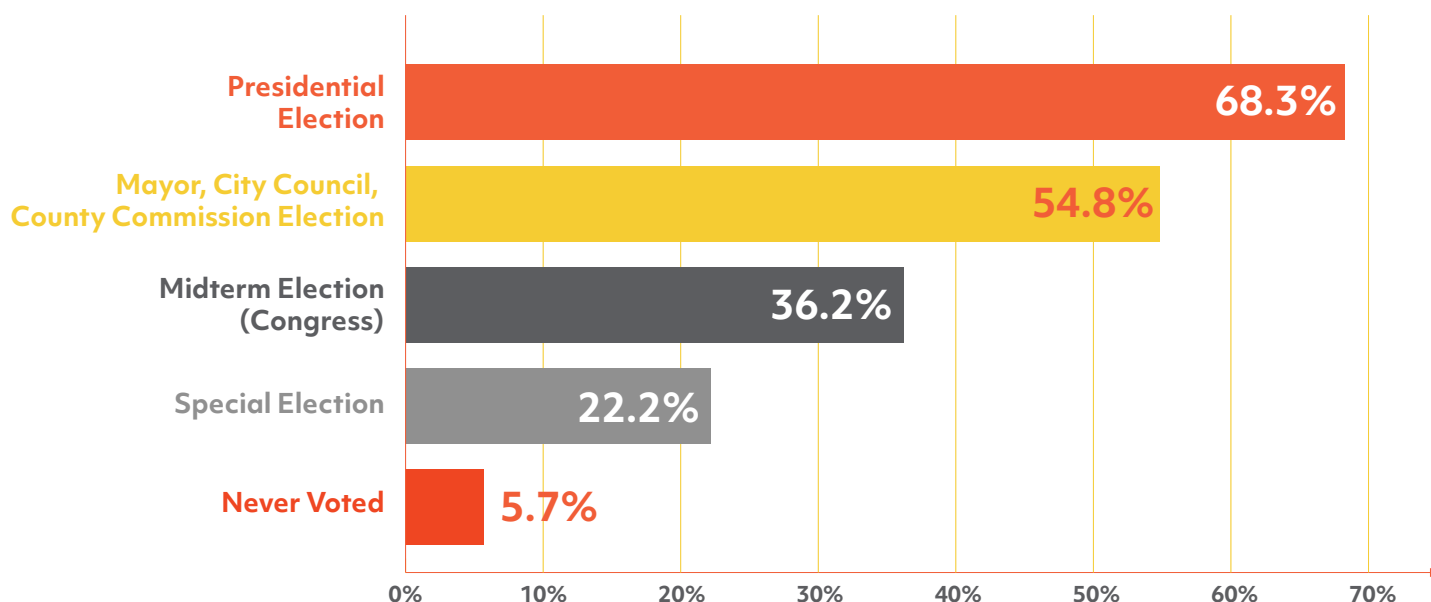
FINDINGS

Election Participation

Survey respondents were most likely to say that the last election in which they participated was a presidential election (68.3 percent). Local elections were the next popular response, with over half of respondents reporting that they participated in the last local election. Although it was not an option, several respondents did write in that they participate in state elections, particularly the gubernatorial election. Special elections, not surprisingly, were the least likely election that respondents participated in. This order in participation is consistent across collection groups, except Community Outreach and HBCUs, for which local election participation slightly surpasses national elections.

A positive finding is that less than six percent of the survey respondents reported never having voted. Presidential elections are the most likely election that respondents participate in, and one participant noted, “Presidential is what I’m concerned about right now—getting Biden four more years.” Over half of survey respondents also identified the importance of participating in local elections. In focus groups, participants noted when asked what elections they are paying attention to this year that, “We don’t have homes we can rent to own, so city council. When you want to move into a white neighborhood, it’s a problem, but Section 8 is a lot of what’s available.” In another focus group, there was consensus that all elections at all levels matter, especially local elections. They also expressed concern that candidates do not always follow through with the promises made or even the issues they purport to care about on the campaign trail.

In which of these elections did you last participate in?



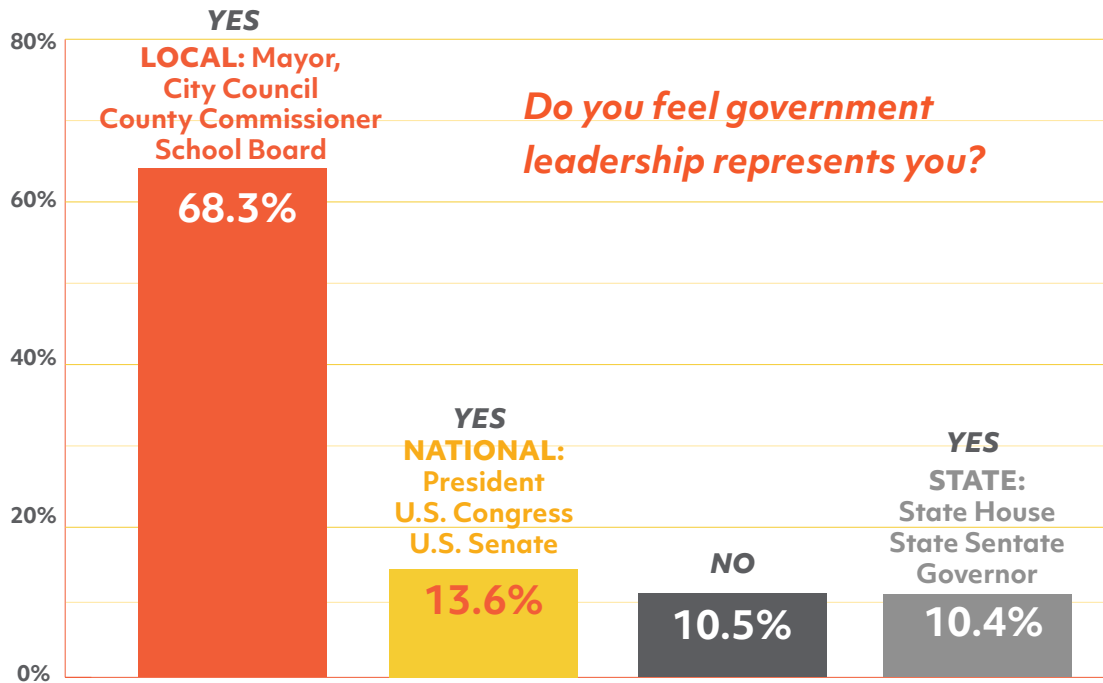
One woman stated, “You have to pay attention to all of them. You have to know who they are and what they are standing on. They tell you they’ll do one thing, and then they get in there and do something else.”

Another followed, saying, “Paying attention to all [elections] is like 1+1+1+1. Paying attention to your local [elections] and who... you’re sending to advocate for you for me is very important. Here on this end in Mobile County, a lot of people say we’re going to do this and change this. If they’re not really down in the trenches and are talking on the surface, people are looking at the political world as a profession instead of advocating for the community, so I pay more attention at the local level than those as you move up the food chain.”

Government Representation

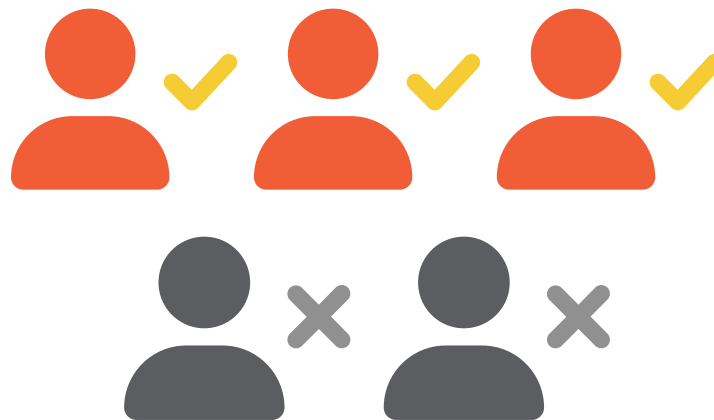
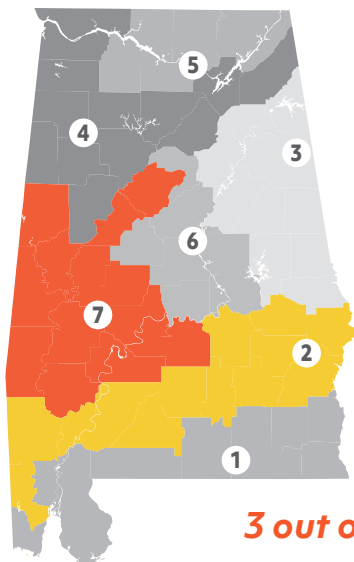
Survey respondents mostly pointed to local government leadership as representing them related to their values and needs. **In fact, one focus group participant shared her positive experience with one of her local officials, saying “My city council member is concerned, and she will look into whatever you bring to her attention. Some don’t, but mine does.”** Although national leadership, particularly the President, was the second most popular response, only 13.6 percent of respondents indicated that they believe national leadership adequately represents them. One of every ten respondents indicated that they do not believe any government leadership represents them and their priorities. It is important to note that focus group participants who assisted in collecting responses stated that they encountered several survey respondents who did not know who their elected representatives were and did not appear to care even if they did not feel represented. The groups shared that this could be generational, and they believe that younger residents who could vote may not be aware of why voting is important or how powerful their votes are.





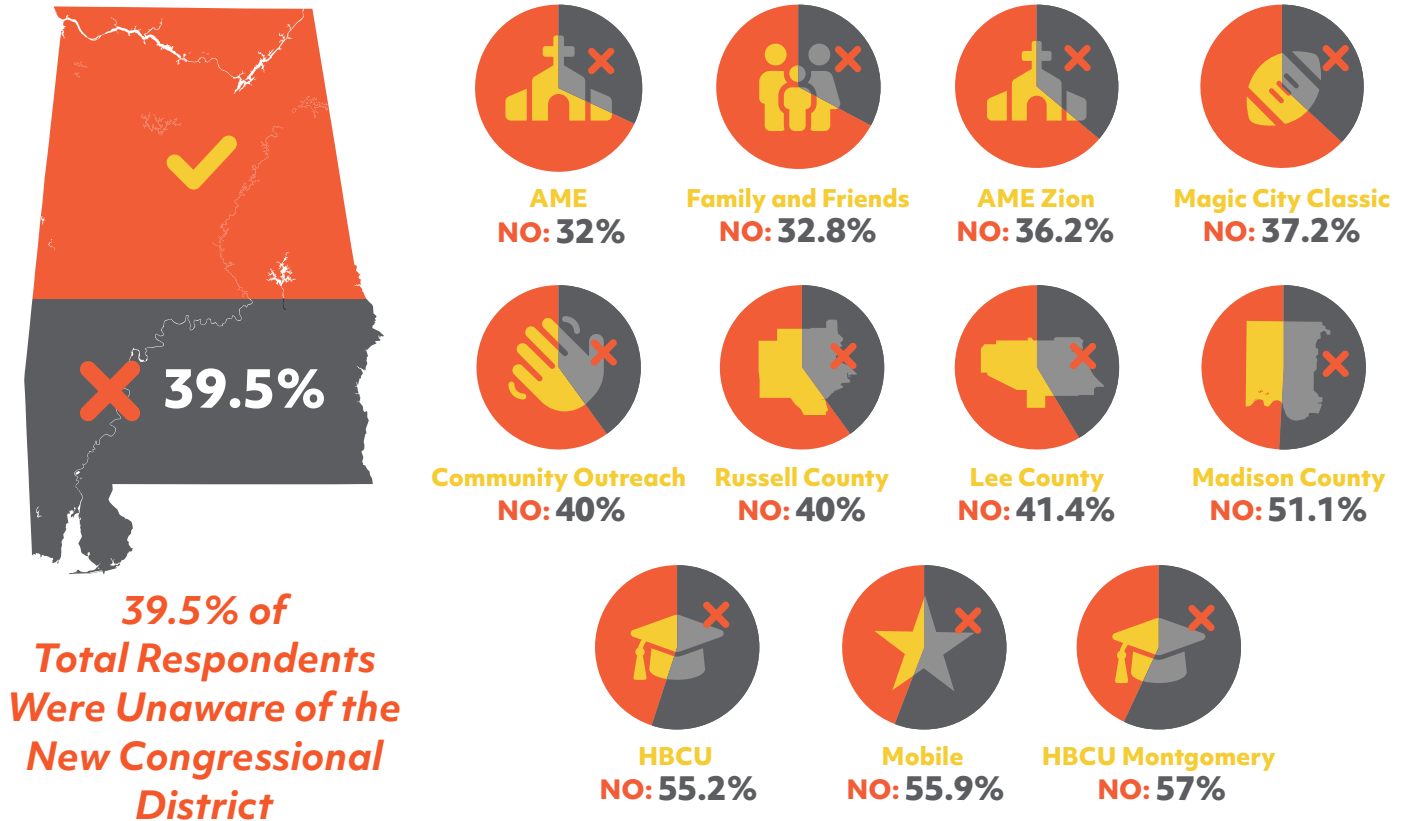
Alabama's New Congressional District

When asked if they were aware of Alabama's new Congressional district, three out of five respondents reported that they are. **Respondents engaged through the faith denominations and family relational groups were aware of the new congressional district, while HBCU respondents from Mobile and Montgomery were the least likely to know about the new district.** The chart on the next page illustrates the percentages of respondents in each collection category who said they were not aware.



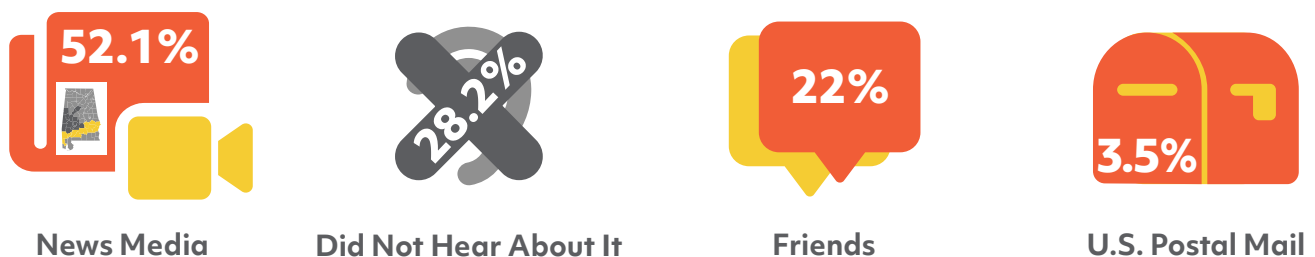
3 out of 5 Respondents Were Aware of Alabama's New Congressional District

Are You Aware Of The New Congressional District?



Half of respondents indicated that they learned of the new Congressional district through the news media. Word-of-mouth through friends was slightly more selected than social media. Nearly one-third of respondents indicated that they had not heard about it in any of the provided information-sharing options.

How Did You Hear About the New Congressional District?



One of the focus groups was exclusively composed of residents of the new Congressional district; however, they did not know they lived in the new district.

The fact that focus group participants from Mobile and Montgomery counties were unaware that they reside in the new Congressional district matches the survey data from participants in those areas. In the other focus group, the participants were not residents within the new district and did not have a strong opinion or knowledge related to the impact that the new Congressional district will have on their lives. One participant did say during the conversation, though, that “I hope the new Congressional district will make Black voices a little louder. [It] might take some slack off the activists.” It is clear that community engagement and education related to the fight for the new district and the importance of the victory was not a priority and has resulted in a disconnection that has not maximized the potential for political power in this district.

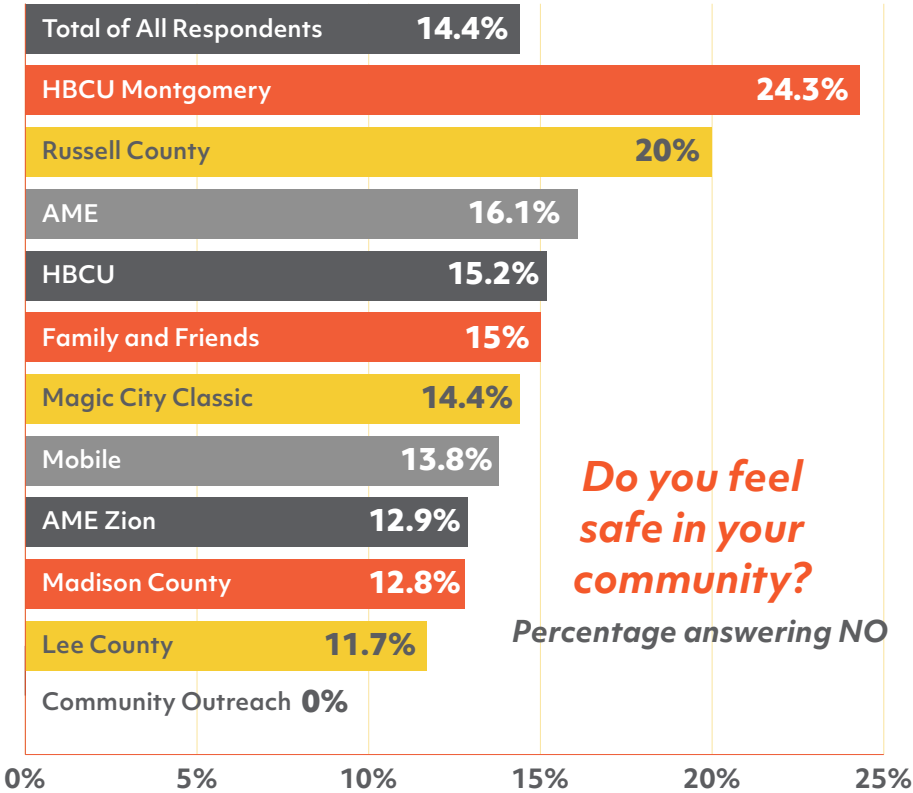
Community Safety

When asked if they feel safe in their community, a large majority of survey respondents reported that they do. The collection group that was most likely to not feel safe in their community were the HBCU Montgomery respondents, with one-quarter answering no to this question.

Focus group participants shared several stories related to why they feel unsafe. **One stated that the police are not helpful, and in serious circumstances**

such as a child being missing, when people do not feel supported or protected, it results in them thinking that their votes do not

matter. She also shared that in these cases, it is necessary for our communities to band together. Another focus group participant shared that she is a surviving gunshot victim and that her kids are not able to play in the neighborhood because of safety issues.



Yet another explained that the city council is important in addressing issues like unlocking a gate on a particular thoroughfare so that children do not have to walk on a dangerous path to get to a park. **Another participant said that more after school programs are needed, and their community “need[s] to speak up and speak out because many voices have power.”**

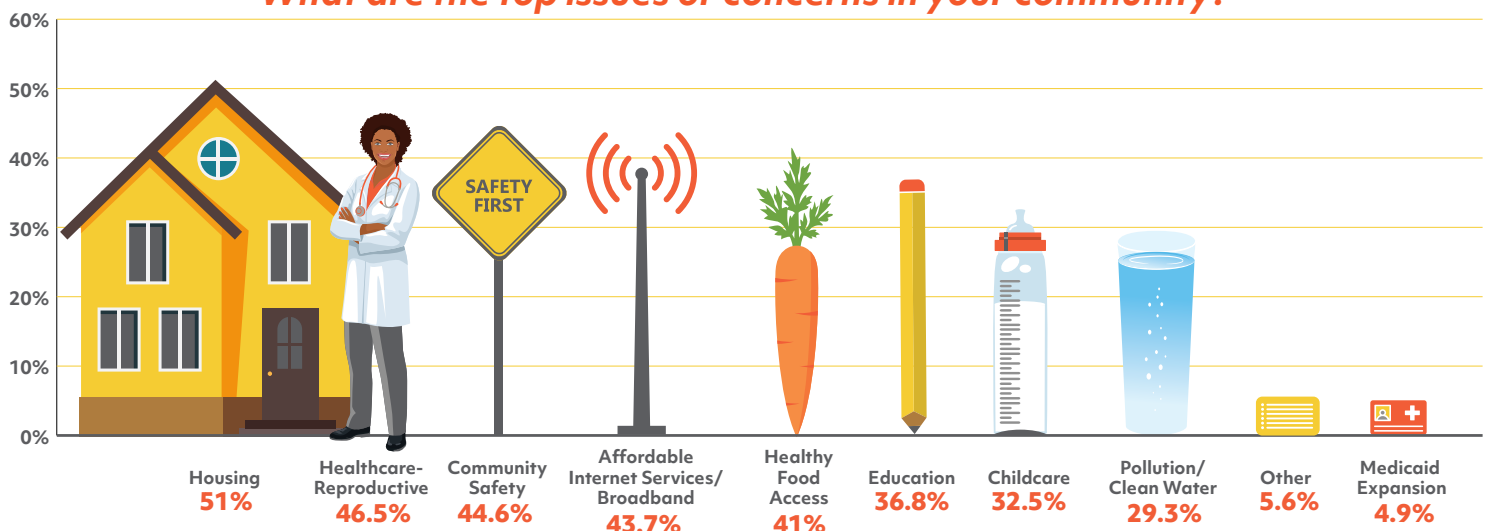
Top Issues

Alabama residents are clear on the issues that are impacting their local communities. The top issues or concerns that survey respondents chose were housing (51 percent), reproductive healthcare (46.5 percent), community safety (44.6 percent), affordable internet services and broadband (43.7 percent), and healthy food access (41 percent). These top issues were consistent across collection groups. It is important to note here that Medicaid expansion was a popular choice when it was an option, but it was not an included option for all collection groups. Among the most common responses for those who chose other were access to healthcare, youth programs, senior resources, disabled person resources, along with economic development to include increasing the number of businesses in the community and the closure of businesses considered unwelcomed by residents. Focus group participants also identified voting rights and vote restoration as key issues.

These issues reflect those that have been identified by trusted sources as statewide concerns.

- ▶ Related to housing (the top issue identified in this survey), according to National Low Income Housing Coalition, it is necessary to have an income of \$33,944 to afford a two-bedroom rental at fair market rate in Alabama. Residents who are considered extremely low-income renters earn a maximum of 26,500 in a four-person household.¹

What are the top issues or concerns in your community?



- ▶ Related to reproductive healthcare, a 2022 report by the March of Dimes identified 25 counties in Alabama as “maternity deserts,” meaning they lacked proper OBGYN services. An additional 21 counties were categorized as having limited access to maternity care. These underserved areas are home to approximately 1.6 million residents, roughly one-third of Alabama’s population. Among the counties with inadequate maternal care, four (Coosa, Dale, Dallas, and Fayette) have populations under 50,000.²
- ▶ Related to community safety, Alabama has the fourth highest rate of gun violence in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s WONDER database. In an average year, 1,149 people die and 3,065 are wounded by guns in Alabama.³
- ▶ Related to affordable internet services, the Alabama Rural Broadband Coalition reports that Alabama is ranked 47th in the U.S. in broadband connectivity, and 73 percent of the state population does not have access to an affordable broadband plan.⁴
- ▶ Related to healthy food access, Alabama has ranked 48th on the Nutritional Well-Being Index, a study that examined the correlation between diet and quality of life.⁵

This is indicative of the need to trust residents in knowing the issues firsthand and being able to provide more context, to share their stories that illustrate how these issues actually impact everyday people, and to co-conspire to pursue effective solutions to address these issues.

When asked in focus groups if they believe their elected officials care about or prioritize these issues, the sentiment was mostly negative. **One focus group participant shared, “They’re not doing what they’re supposed to do. They sit up there with those high-priced suits on. We are doing what we’re supposed to be doing, but they’re not doing what they are supposed to be doing.”**

¹ <https://www.al.com/news/2023/04/affordable-rental-homes-out-of-reach-for-more-alabamians-in-2023-report-finds.html>

² <https://alabamareflector.com/2023/08/02/report-alabama-has-highest-rates-of-maternal-mortality-among-southern-states/>

³ <https://everystat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Gun-Violence-in-Alabama-2.pdf>

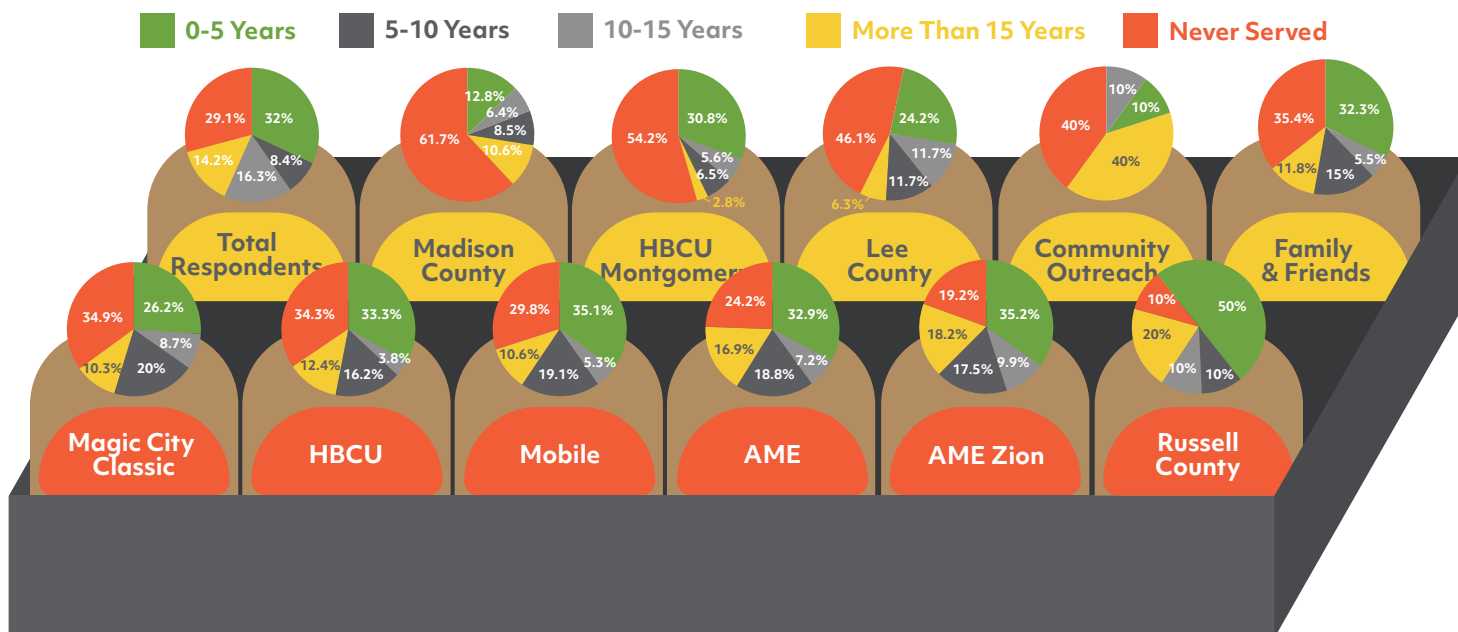
⁴ <https://broadband.money/state-broadband-offices/alabama>

⁵ <https://www.apr.org/news/2023-10-30/alabama-ranks-low-in-study-on-nutrition-and-well-being>

Civic Duty

Out of the 1,879 surveyed, **three out of every ten survey respondents indicated that they have never received a summons for jury duty.** HBCU Montgomery, Madison County and Lee County respondents had the highest number of respondents to report never receiving a jury summons. Conversely, nearly one-third of responses have received a jury duty summons within the last five years, and Russell County respondents were most likely to report receiving a summons in this recent time period with half of its respondents reporting this, followed by AME Zion (35.2 percent), Mobile (35.1 percent), HBCU (33.3 percent), AME (32.9 percent), family relational respondents (32.3 percent), and HBCU Montgomery (30.8 percent). Two of every five respondents in the Community Outreach group had not received a summons for jury duty in over 15 years.

When was the last time you recieved a summons for jury duty?



In focus groups, participants pretty resoundingly expressed that they had never been summoned for jury duty and many said they do not want to be. There were only two participants who had been asked to serve, and only one actually served. The woman who served shared her story: **"I have done jury duty one time. I didn't feel comfortable when we were voting... I don't know how to do it-[the jury] should be equal. I noticed how they were voting-we were voting against each other. I don't know how they can equal that out. We were voting against one of us. Sometimes people don't listen to what the real case is-they're just looking at the person's color."**

The person who answered his summons but wasn't selected shared, "I had it for the first time about a year ago. I didn't like it because I was a law enforcement officer at that time. It worked out because I wasn't chosen. To be judged by your peers is a good thing, but I've never gone fully through it. Depending on what case it is, I probably wouldn't have liked it." After this conversation, other focus group participants shared that they believe if more people talked about their jury duty experience, it would help people become more aware and interested in its importance. **Once the groups discussed the fact that residents are selected for jury duty from the voter rolls and presented with ways in which juries that do not include community members who are Black and brown can be harmful, participants began to rethink their stance on not wanting to serve on a jury.**

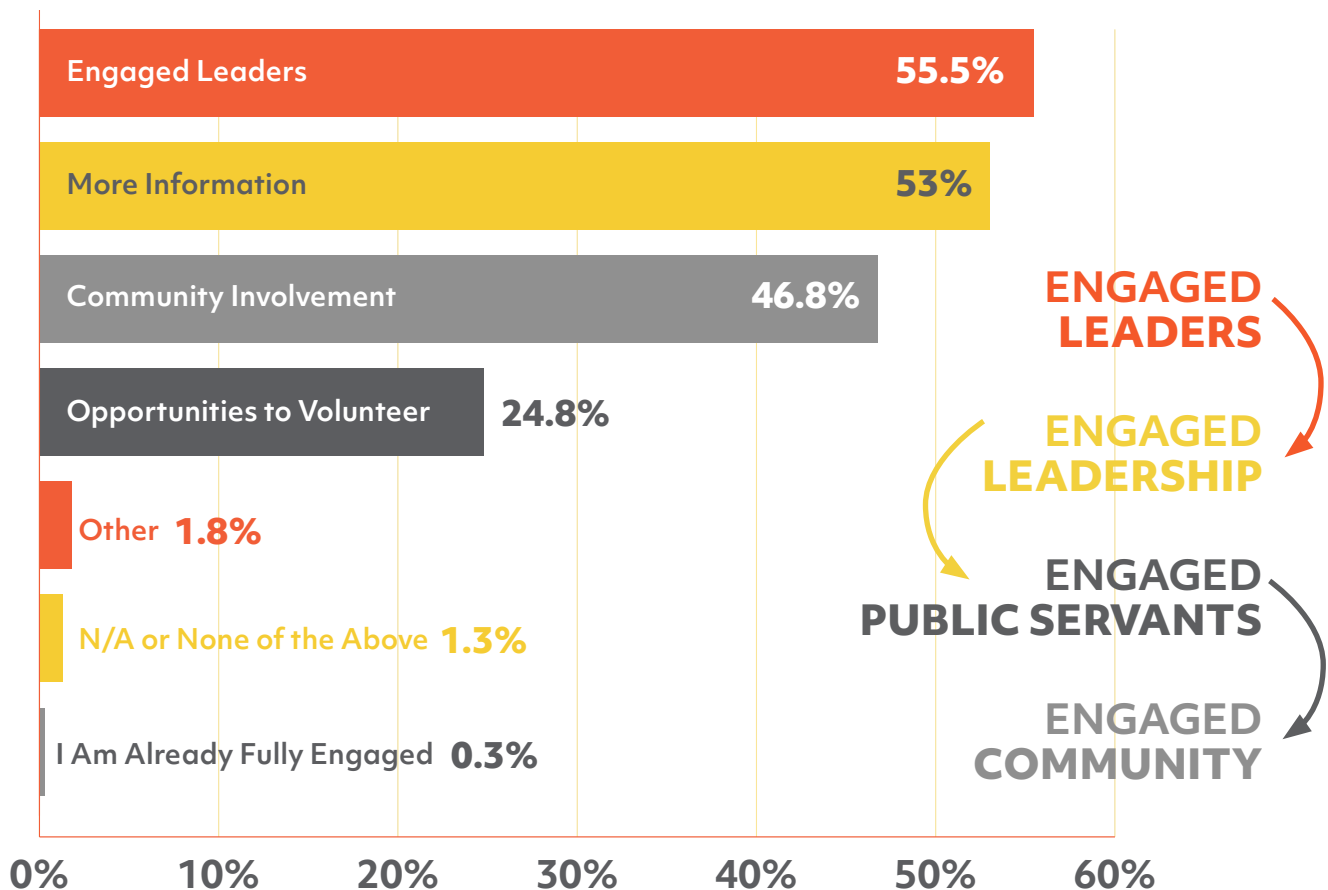
While these findings might be surprising, they are not new occurrences. **In fact, underrepresentation and exclusion of Black people on juries has been an issue since Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which outlawed race-based discrimination in jury selection.** An investigation by the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in 2010 found that racial discrimination was still rampant in courtrooms across Alabama and several other Southern states. Although the Supreme Court did acknowledge in 1935 in *Norris v. Alabama* that state and local officials did indeed illegally exclude Black people from juries because of their race, EJI contends that racially discriminatory practices remain widespread as state officials used "more covert and less overt" methods of exclusion.⁶ It is problematic that so many survey respondents have either never received a jury duty summons or have not received one in over a decade, and those who have likely faced racial discrimination in the selection process. Still others who actually were selected found themselves in a room with a minority perspective, grappling with whether to speak up. This is just one of many issues that illuminate how difficult it can be for Black community members to participate civically.

⁶ <https://eji.org/report/race-and-the-jury/a-history-of-discrimination-in-jury-selection/#chapter-1>

Community Engagement

When asked what they would need in their community to help with engagement, the top two responses were engaged leaders (55.5 percent) and more information (53 percent). Many community members expressed that their elected officials and/or the public servants in their communities are not engaging the community, and they do not believe that those leaders are accountable to the community they are supposedly serving. These (engaged leaders and more information) were the top two issues across all collection groups, except three specific groups. For respondents in groups from Mobile County, Madison County, family relational collection groups, "more information" ranked third while "community involvement" and "other" were the top ranked responses. Focus group participants expressed that communing with each other, learning how to communicate and work collaboratively, showing more love, compassion, and encouragement, and praying are also critical.

What is needed in your community to help you engage?



One focus group participant, who is a Black man over the age of 50, expressed how important it is to him to encourage the young people in his sphere of influence to get involved. He shared, **“I really try to encourage the young people, even at 18, to participate. A lot of our youth don’t believe, and they see the world differently. I encourage them to understand that they stand on the backs of people who made sacrifices to give them these opportunities. It’s not that we can’t make a difference. We’re just outvoted. Other ethnic groups take advantage of the voting process, whereas we’re just letting it go. We have to change that mindset and put it in the forefront like we would anything else. You say you don’t understand why and you’re arguing about it—you have the opportunity to make a difference in numbers, and we have to continue to push that. If you don’t vote, the other groups move the agenda. Maybe it’s our approach in how we’re delivering that message. But it has to be a commitment. It’s not mandatory, but it’s mandatory because that’s how you affect change.”**

Another added that there's a need for education, saying “In my church, we’re showing movies to show what generations before us went through to make sure we are able to vote. The young people simply don’t know.” Another focus group participant agreed, stating simply that “We’ve got to find a way to educate the young people. There are a lot of them out there who don’t know how to get started or know the benefits of it.” This conversation highlights the concern older community members have about younger community members and how to engage them and include them in community building.

For movement spaces, having inter/cross-generational conversations is paramount to addressing our collective challenges and expressing our collective joy and love. In order to commit to the survival of the whole community, a space of belongingness for the whole community must be curated and co-created with and for the whole community. Moreover, communities should lean into the tension of inter/cross-generational dynamics and view them as an invitation to forge new relationships, find solutions, excavate wisdom and innovations, and to create a space of healing. Addressing our collective challenges and expressing our collective joy and love. If we are committed to

the survival of the whole community, a space of belongingness for the whole community must be curated and co-created with and for the whole community. Moreover, our communities should lean into the tension of inter/cross-generational dynamics and view them as an invitation to forge new relationships, find solutions, excavate wisdom and innovations, and to create a space of healing.

One major takeaway from both the survey and the subsequent focus groups is that many voters in this constituency need to be reconnected to the power they have to change the issues that impact them the most or to have that power reinforced. The survey team and focus group participants who indicated that they assisted in collecting survey responses shared that many of those who declined to participate in the survey simply did not recognize the value of sharing their thoughts and opinions because they do not believe that they can have an impact on politics or in their local communities. Additionally, it is clear by responses that many voters are experiencing fatigue related to how unrepresented they feel, how much they participate in elections, their sentiment about jury duty, and their awareness of the new Congressional district. There is hope, though, because there are those who know they have individual and collective power and work to educate and influence their networks. One focus group participant summed it up perfectly, saying **“My vote and my VOICE have power. My vote is an extension of my voice... My opinion matters, and I may be able to sway someone else and help them understand the issue differently.”**



RECOMMENDATIONS

This report illuminates a gap in Black communities related to awareness, the perception of power, and the belief that the community can influence their own outcomes. **There are many ways in which this report can be utilized to make a difference in the civic participation of Black residents in Alabama, including but not limited to:**

- ✓ **This survey should be extended to gather additional responses in additional communities within the state of Alabama.** This survey should also expand with additional questions that dig more deeply into the issues that this report describes and with prompts for demographic information so that the information can be explored by sub-demographics to understand differing needs and perspectives by age, gender, urbanicity, and other factors. There is also an opportunity to cover more ground by training additional canvassers and organizers to collect responses and have deep relational conversations beyond petitions, surveys, etc., to engage respondents.
- ✓ **This survey served as a first touch for many Black Alabama residents and should be used as an on-ramp for further engagement and organizing efforts.** For those respondents who have not yet been re-engaged, sharing this report and providing a briefing and an opportunity for discussion can be a vital way to reconnect with those residents and spur deeper conversations, educational engagement, and leadership training opportunities. Research has shown that Black voters value consistent meaningful engagement and that when this happens, they are more likely to be civically engaged, including voting.
- ✓ **These findings should be utilized to train and organize more organizers in Alabama.** This report demonstrated that there is a clear need to organize voters who have been historically left behind and create avenues for them to dream and pursue their liberation; to ask people to identify what the problems are and tie them very directly to solutions. Many of these voters have been conditioned to be terrified to have an imagination about what could be—what their communities could look and feel like, what they could accomplish in their own lives, what their children can be and pursue—and what it would take to make what they imagine reality. Many of the residents that were engaged have only experienced power over them—not having it. Some fear the word “power,” some cannot fathom having power, and most have seen it misused. Per the Black Southern Women’s

Collaborative, the organizer's role is to put the decision to fight for freedom in front of people. In the words of Phyllis Hill, an organizer communicates that "your imagination of the world is just as important as anyone else's" and there does exist the possibility of a co-government structure with community and for community.

- ✓ **These findings should be a wake-up call for Alabama elected officials and philanthropic organizations on the power of these communities if they are informed, empowered, and organized.** These voters should be top priority for all levels of officials because they are a key voting bloc. They are moveable, and while there are many who are not plugged into local, state, or federal politics, there are many more who are paying attention and are not participating because their elected officials ignore them and because their government does not appear to work on their behalf. While traditional campaign tactics that are transactional are not effective for these voters, there are approaches that have been tested that could be effective in transforming these voters from disengaged to community leaders.
- ✓ **There is a need for stronger institutions and alignment among those institutions that can provide knowledge and build power in Black communities.** The infrastructure in Black community is woefully missing or underdeveloped, and with alignment among movement organizations, Black radio and other media, Black churches, and more, there is potential to leverage the over 25 percent of Alabama's population that is Black. Due to the historical marginalization of individuals who do not show up outside of the imagination of white supremacy, investment is often lacking for those who are interested and intentionally doing the work. Now is the time to invest in organizations such as the Black Southern Women's Collaborative and other Black and Brown-led power-building organizations that are representative of the breadth and depth of the Southern and Alabama organizing infrastructure. The fellowship's intention, which led to this survey project, is to identify the unseen and purposely ignored who have made it their life mission to address the suffering of their community and neighbors. It is with this investment that real change and progress can be manifested.

ABOUT THE FELLOWS



Teumbay Barnes

A passionate community activist and advocate for childcare and sexual assault prevention, Teumbay (Tee) Barnes brings more than 20 years of experience in community organizing, policy, leadership development, journalism, and higher education to her role. Barnes has spent her career working to change the narrative and create safe and sacred spaces for those experiencing any form of injustice.

As firmly entrenched in her hometown of Prattville, AL, where she still resides, as she is the wider region, Barnes dedicates considerable time to helping others. While serving as the Co-Chair of the Alabama Women of Color affinity group in 2019, Barnes envisioned and implemented the group's inaugural "Alabama Women of Color Conference," which convened 250+ women from seven states to Montgomery, AL to learn more about providing direct services and preventing Intimate Partner Violence in communities of Color. The conference garnered considerable sponsorship and has carried on virtually since. Barnes also spent 10 years as a mentor for the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative Unita Blackwell Young Women's Leadership Institute.

A devout scholar, Barnes holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Alabama State University and a Master's in Post-Secondary Education from Troy University and has served as an adjunct instructor. Barnes is a 2010 graduate of the PLAN (Progressive Advocacy Leadership Network) National Women's Law Center. She was also a 2011 (inaugural year) Fellow of the Greensboro Justice Fund at the Highlander Center, a graduate of the Leading by Example Leadership Program, awarded the 2017 Emergent Leader of the Year, 50 under 50 Class IX at Alabama State University, an inaugural Black Southern Women's Collaborative Fellow and most recently awarded a Leadership for Democracy and Social Justice's 2024 Movement Leadership Fellowship.

Barnes currently serves on the Alabama ACLU Board of Directors, is a member of the Society of Clotilda, and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., where she currently serves as 2nd Vice President of the Montgomery (AL) Alumnae Chapter.



Dr. Adia Winfrey

Dr. Adia Winfrey (affectionately known as Dr. Dia), is the mother of four children, a distinguished Doctor of Psychology, celebrated author, and visionary behind the H.Y.P.E. (Healing Young People thru Empowerment) Movement, stands as a champion of youth empowerment through Hip Hop culture. As the founding president of Elevating Us, she has impacted emotional wellness and fostered hope within communities, touching the lives of nearly 6,000 youth across the United States.

With two consecutive election campaigns under her belt, Dr. Winfrey has dedicated two decades to becoming a foremost authority in the prevention field, advocating tirelessly for vulnerable communities, including juvenile corrections facilities. Notably, she pioneered the H.Y.P.E. curriculum, a groundbreaking Hip Hop-based group therapy program for adjudicated males ages 13-22, at the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

Dr. Winfrey's journey into organizing and social justice commenced in middle school, and by the age of 16 in 1996, she was chosen as the Olympic Torchbearer for her exceptional community activism. Her coming-of-age years during Hip Hop's golden era, combined with her early community engagement, played a pivotal role in shaping her political consciousness. Winfrey firmly believes in Hip Hop culture as a potent vehicle for education, healing, and empowerment.

In 2020, Dr. Adia McClellan Winfrey made history as the first Black female Congressional Nominee in Alabama's 3rd Congressional District. Renowned as "The Hip Hop Congressional Candidate," her groundbreaking campaign garnered national acclaim for leveraging Hip Hop culture as a catalyst for political mobilization. Beyond the ballots, her campaign birthed Transform Alabama, a political mobilization and education organization, symbolizing a commitment to empowering voters and fostering civic engagement. Even in defeat, Winfrey's campaign evolved into a potent force for voter education, emphasizing the electoral process's importance and reinforcing the significance of every vote and voice. Dr. Winfrey's dedication to Transform Alabama showcases her unwavering passion for building a legacy focused on empowering youth and communities through the transformative essence of Hip Hop culture.



Onoyemi Williams

Onoyemi Erinkitola Williams is the Deputy Director of Faith In Action Alabama where she manages the organizing efforts of 15 organizing teams located throughout Alabama with a volunteer base of over ten thousand and leads the development of strategic campaigns for the organization statewide campaigns. She is part of the Faith In Action National Training Team and LiveFree National Team.

Onoyemi is known throughout the country as the leading voice from Alabama about the social deterrents of health for communities of color plagued by gun violence and institutional violence. Additionally, Onoyemi, leads the organizations voter and civic engagement efforts. While as an organizer for the Peacemaker Campaign (a community centered safety campaign), Onoyemi and her team secured \$5.2 million dollars in local funding for a community based anti-gun violence program in Birmingham, AL, launched weekly night walks led by clergy in high crime areas, created victim response teams to support victims or families of homicide victims that resulted in a change in Alabama Law in 2022 and \$2.5 million in additional funding to support victims of violence in 2023 also she established community roundtable collaboratives for gun violence programs throughout Alabama.

Onoyemi is a native of Pensacola, FL and a former law enforcement officer with the State of Florida. Onoyemi is a graduate of Southern Illinois University, Pat Thomas School of Law Enforcement, and did her graduate studies at Troy University. She is a 2023/2024 Movement Leader Fellow of Colin Powell School for Civil and Global Leadership at City College of New York, a 2023 Black Future Labs Fellow and 2023 Southern Black Women Collaborative Inaugural Fellow by which the Alabama Southern Black Women Collaborative was developed. She is also a proud mother, grandmother, an outspoken little sister, a hardheaded daughter, a motor cycle enthusiast and a friend that can be called on.



Kameryn Thigpen

Kameryn Thigpen is a Southern Black girl from Birmingham, Alabama and she is a social justice organizer.

She has been an advocate since 2016 when she attended Anytown Alabama. She attended the University of Alabama at Birmingham and graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science with a double minor in African American Studies and Human Rights. In April 2023, She received her Master's Degree in Public Administration at UAB. She also published her comparative case study thesis on how the nonprofit sector can

be an educational model addressing racial violence in Tulsa and Birmingham.

She is the creator of Hipped Interests, a nonprofit organization that promotes social justice education through media content and community programming. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and creating herbal teas and she is a big Star Wars fan.

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER



Ranada Robinson

Ranada Robinson is the owner of Robinson Research and Consulting, where she supports community and nonprofit organizations with quality and culturally aware research design and data analysis.

By day, Ranada leads New Georgia Project's and New Georgia Project Action Fund's award-winning research department and is at the forefront of research on Black voters' sentiments, attitudes, and practices around voting and key issues in Georgia. She has overseen at least seven state-wide polls of voters of color and has managed focus groups with Black voters across Georgia. She is a master at infusing research into messaging for myriad audiences. She is also Program Evaluator for Our Village

United, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting and growing small Black businesses.

Prior to her current roles, Ranada was Senior Project Manager at Market Street Services, a holistic economic development consulting firm that has worked in 35 states and over 150 communities. Ranada was responsible for providing quantitative and qualitative data analysis and managing client projects, developing research documents and strategic

ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

plans for communities from San Marcos, TX to St. Petersburg, FL, designing staff training, and evaluating current and potential research tools and resources. In her role, Ranada has served as lead researcher and project manager on an array of economic and community development projects and other special projects in many communities, including her hometown of Jackson, Mississippi.

Ranada holds a Master of Science in Urban Policy Studies with specializations in policy analysis and economic development and planning and a Master of Science in Risk Management and Insurance from Georgia State University. Ranada is also a graduate of Tougaloo College, where she earned bachelor's degrees in mathematics and computer science. She has completed the IEDC Basic Economic Development Course at Georgia Tech, and she has received certification from Economic Modeling Specialists International (EMSI).

With a heart for service, Ranada is active in several organizations, including New Leaders Council. A 2017 alumna of the NLC Atlanta Institute, Ranada has served as the chapter's Finance Chair and Alumni Co-Chair. She was also the 2018-2019 President of Outstanding Atlanta, the city's premier honor for young professionals in recognition of their business and civic accomplishments, and currently serves on the organization's Board of Trustees. She also serves on the Tufts University CIRCLE Advisory Board. In 2017, she was featured in the 18th edition of Who's Who in Black Atlanta. She is the ninth President of the award-winning Tau Epsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., which serves East Point and College Park, as well as its nonprofit arm The Twenty Pearls Foundation, Inc. She also served as a Service Projects Liaison for the sorority's 2016 international conference, helping to manage 23 community projects throughout Metro Atlanta including AKA's first and only KaBOOM! playground build, an HBCU Expo, and the donation of backpacks to metro Atlanta organizations. In 2016, she was inducted into the Tougaloo College Inaugural Class of 40 Under 40 for her career achievements as well as her alumni leadership. Ranada is a past president of the Atlanta Tougaloo Alumni Chapter, has also served multiple terms as Southeastern Regional Representative for the Tougaloo College National Alumni Association and as Membership Chairman. In 2015, Ranada was selected from 300 applicants to participate in the Next City Vanguard conference in Reno, Nevada, where she worked with fellow urban leaders to brainstorm ideas using tactical urbanism for Reno redevelopment projects.

As busy as Ranada is, her #1 role is being a mother to her vibrant nine-year-old son Frederick Daniel Todd. Ranada's goal is not only to ensure that her legacy includes making lasting improvements in communities worldwide but to also raise a successful, compassionate young man.

BLACK SOUTHERN WOMEN'S COLLABORATIVE



Phyllis M. Hill

Phyllis M. Hill is the Founder and Executive Lead of the Black Southern Women's Collaborative (BSWC). The BSWC was created to be a soft place to fully belong, without defense or pretense, that honors Black women's labor, leadership, and brilliance. Since its inception, the BSWC has raised \$7 million for organizations led by Black women across the South. Phyllis has coordinated with the BSWC for regional programming, which includes training, communications, digital, political, and fundraising work. This has led to more Southern Black organizing capacity and infrastructure in states that are usually intentionally ignored and forgotten.

In Phyllis' previous position as the National Organizing Director at Faith in Action, Phyllis built a regional support structure for 45 state and local organizing groups. This included organizer, clergy, and leader training, campaign, and organizational coaching. Phyllis has rooted the national organizing program in developing public faith-based grassroots leadership that changes the narrative about who belongs and drives public campaigns for material change. Additionally, Phyllis helped create the Black Women's Caucus of Faith in Action, centering Womanist Theology as fundamental as how Black Women can lead with their whole selves.

Before joining Faith in Action National, Phyllis worked for eight years in Minneapolis, MN, as the Lead Organizer for ISAIAH. Her many accomplishments include working with the Minneapolis School Board to place a moratorium on non-violent suspensions in all elementary schools in the district, partnering with Robbinsdale School District to reduce suspension by 80%, and collaborating with the MN Commissioner of Education to place equity in its mission statement. Her proudest moments are working with congregants to address spiritual matters that hinder their leadership, emboldening them to live with purpose, not fear.

Phyllis received her Bachelor of Arts in History from Georgia Southern University while participating in a study abroad at Oxford University focused on Religious Studies. She also holds a Master's degree in African American Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



To: Bishop Harry Seawright, 9th Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church

Bishop George D. Crenshaw, Alabama-Florida District of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

When we embarked on this journey, we shared the vision and possible outcomes. It was encouraging to learn your vision, and desire to engage your congregations and the communities that you serve were congruent. The participation, presentations, and feedback from your congregations helped to cultivate this study and helped shape Alabama's future.

We are grateful for the time you and your congregations have taken to participate in this research project. The contributions of the 9th Episcopal District of the AME Church and the Alabama-Florida District of the AME Zion Church will help us to continue to identify how citizens of Alabama can continue to improve their overall quality of life and pave better outcomes for future generations.

Once again, thank you for the partnership!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



To: Alabama Forward, Faith in Action Alabama, and Transform Alabama

In the weeks following the landmark *Allen v. Milligan* Supreme Court ruling, we collectively shared our vision. It was through our shared efforts that we were able to create the space for this vision to become a reality.

To Alabama Forward, thank you for funding this project and providing backend technical support. To Faith in Action Alabama, thank you for leveraging relationships, your base, and your staff in support of this project led by Black Women. We would particularly like to thank Transform Alabama and Dr. Adia Winfrey, a rural Black woman-led organization that went the extra mile to galvanize rural voices to be heard and included. This is exemplary of what it means to follow Black women!

During this once-in-a-generation election cycle, collaboration is key. It is through authentic, integrity-filled, and trust-based collaboration that builds power, creating a "Sweet Home Alabama" for all!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



To: Robert Woods Johnson Foundation & JPB Foundation

The Black Southern Women's Collaborative would like to thank the Robert Woods Johnson and JPB Foundations for their financial investments in Black women in Alabama. Through your continued giving, the BSWC and the inaugural cohort of the Alabama Fellowship Program have engaged with thousands of people to organize a state often forgotten and left to the imaginations of people who do not share our values of Black families matter— being alive, thriving and deciding what paths we want to create for ourselves. We look forward to a continued partnership.

With gratitude,

BSWC and the Inaugural AL Fellowship Cohort

APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONS

BSWC 2023 Community Outreach Survey

In which of these elections did you last participate in?

- ☐ Mayoral/City Council/County Commission
- ☐ Presidential Election
- ☐ Midterm Election (Congress)
- ☐ Special Election
- ☐ I Have Never Voted
- ☐ Other:

Do you feel governmental leadership represents you?

- ☐ Local (Mayor/City Council/County Commissioner/School Board)
- ☐ State (House of Representative/AL Senator/Governor)
- ☐ National (President/ U.S. Congressman/ U.S. Senator)
- ☐ Other:

Are you aware of the new Congressional district?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How did you hear about the new Congressional district?

- ☐ News Media
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ U.S. Postal Mail
- ☐ I did not hear it about

Do you feel safe in your community?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

What are the issues or concerns that you have for your community?

- ☐ Affordable Internet Services/broadband
- ☐ Healthcare– Reproductive Health
- ☐ Medicaid Expansion
- ☐ Community Safety
- ☐ Pollution/Clean water
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Childcare
- ☐ Healthy Food Access
- ☐ Other:

When was the last time you received a summons for Jury Duty?

- ☐ 0 - 5 Years
- ☐ 5 - 10 Years
- ☐ 10 - 15 Years
- ☐ More than 15 Years
- ☐ I have never been summons for Jury Duty.

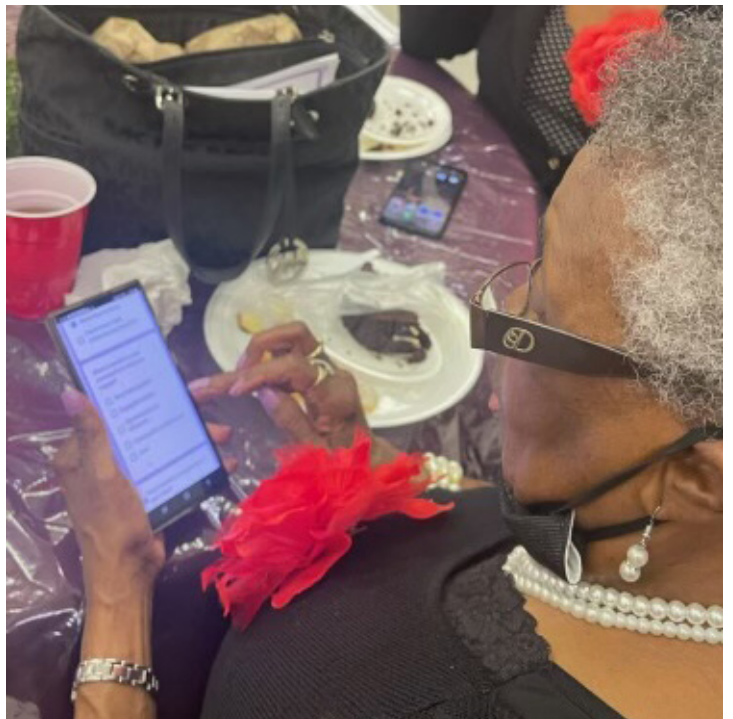
What is needed in your community to help you engage?

- ☐ More information
- ☐ Engaged Leaders
- ☐ Opportunities to Volunteer
- ☐ Community Involvement
- ☐ Other:

May I contact you again at a later time?

Please provide your email and phone number:







**BLACK
SOUTHERN
WOMEN'S
COLLABORATIVE**

Vision Statement

The Black Southern Women's Collaborative is a soft place (a place of full belonging) for Executive Directors' labor, leadership, brilliance, and fullness as human beings to be centered, honored, and invested. To create a soft place is to create a space where black women are protected, vulnerable, and can be our true, authentic selves.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Black Southern Women's Collaborative is a commitment to enhance and empower Southern Black life, particularly Black Women, no matter their status, occupation, sexuality, spirituality, or color, by holding regional space to strategize, train, and fundraise for the sustainability of our organizations, which also serve as political homes for our people.

BlackSouthernWomensCollaborative.com